




OFFICE OF THE CHAIR
JOE A. MARTINEZ, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DISTRICT 11

Memorandum

To: George Burgess, County Manager

From: Joe A. Martinez, Chairman 

Date: August 10, 2006

Re: Heightened Security Alert/Miami International Airport

This morning, it was announced that British intelligence agents had discovered a plot by terrorists who were targeting U.S. bound flights from London. Although twenty one arrests have already been made in England, it has not been confirmed whether or not others involved in the plot may still be at large. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has also indicated that there may also be a threat of other "copycat" terrorists.

For the first time since the 9-11 attacks on New York, Pittsburgh, and Washington all domestic and international flights are under an "orange" alert — one step below red and the threat level is now "red" for flights from Britain. Miami International Airport (MIA) has four inbound and four outbound flights a day to and from London on British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, and American Airlines. As you are aware, MIA's impact on the local economy is \$19.1 billion annually, and MIA and related aviation industries contribute 242,387 jobs directly and indirectly, making it the largest economic engine in South Florida. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that the 15th busiest airport for passengers in the nation, the 3rd largest for international passengers and the number one in international freight in the country is protected from any interruptions that could cause harm.

DHS held a conference call this afternoon to discuss the recent threat to the airline industry where Tracy Henke, the Assistant Secretary for Grants and Training at DHS reportedly stated that states and localities could use up to 25% of their UASI and Law Enforcement & Terrorism Prevention funds during the current elevated threat level to the airline industry to meet needs. The Governors of states such as Massachusetts and California have called in the National Guard to help relieve federal and local law enforcement agencies carrying out strict federal regulations under the current heightened threat levels. As of yet, Florida has not taken such action but I intend to reach out to the Governor's office with regards to this issue.

I am concerned that if the orange and red alerts continue for an extended period of time, huge strains could be placed on local coffers already depleted by relief and recovery costs incurred by the two hurricanes that hit Miami-Dade County last year. This heightened security will negatively impact our county both financially as well as with manpower resources that have been re-directed to MIA such as police and fire personnel to include the current Alpha Bravo status.

I ask that you immediately look into the use of UASI funding and/or Law Enforcement and Terrorism Prevention funds in order to immediately offset/defray some of the financial burden to the specific departments. I am aware that the State of Florida received \$18,610,000 in Law Enforcement and Terrorism Prevention funds in FY06, and the Miami area is to receive \$15, 980,000 UASI funds during the same period. As the government entity responsible for securing MIA and the Port of Miami, I have directed the BCC Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to assure that allocation of additional state and federal funds be prioritized for Miami Dade County as the lead agency and would ask that you do the same through the County's public safety entities. I would also encourage all costs incurred by Miami Dade County as a result of the increased terror alert be properly documented in case of possible state/federal reimbursement for the heightened security alert.

Furthermore, I will direct the BCC OIA office to also pursue monies to augment any UASI funds that may be used to pay for additional expenses for this emergency should it be extended for an indefinite period of time.

If you should have any questions please contact my Chief of Staff, Javier I. Marques at (305) 552-1155.

JM/jim

Cc: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez
Honorable Vice-Chairman Dennis C. Moss and
Members of the Board of County Commissioners
Murray Greenberg, County Attorney
Susie Torriente, Assistant County Manager
Herminio Lorenzo, Director, Miami Dade Fire and Rescue Department
and Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
Joe Rasco, Director, BCC Office of Intergovernmental Affairs